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## THE VALUE OF THE APPLICATION FORM

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By many of those seeking employment, the application form is considered a "necessary evil" and one of the numerous trials of the unemployed. Few seem to realize the fact that its value is twofold:—First: to the applicant; Second: to the employer.

The larger value is assuredly to the applicant, for the application form frequently decides the vital question "to be or not to be" the accepted suppliant. The second value is dependent upon the insight and experience of the employer.

### *The Form*

Is the brief or detailed application form of more value? This must be judged from the scope of the employment bureau, and the number of employees considered as a normal force. The more detailed the form, the more frequently will a marked hesitancy be manifest on the part of the applicant, when asked to "fill out and return." Some application forms request the prospective employee to place a check against his or her predominant characteristics, enumerating thirty to fifty such, as "honest, ambitious, prompt, careful," etc. One such form was returned to a superintendent with the astonishing but befitting notation "self praise is no recommendation."

### *Request for Form*

The attitude of applicants when requesting form of application conveys some idea of the intensity of the desire for employment. On the theory that "the more urgent is the need for a position, the more industrious will be the worker," a close observer will note hesitation of some in proffering the request for a blank as compared with the anxiety of others to embrace the opportunity offered by this form of introduction to the employer. "Do I have to fill this out?" "May I take this home and mail it to you?" and such questions, often indicate a reluctance signifying the lack of an urgent desire for employment. The one who will accept "anything" at

least shows a strong desire for employment even though his ability may be very limited. The familiarity of some when requesting a blank at once suggests their adaptability to certain classes of work, and a corresponding unfitness for other duties where reserve is essential. The applicant who has not graduated from eighth grade at school and who asks "Say Jack, can I get a job here?" would probably be suited for the shipping division, but surely not considered seriously for floorman.

### *Acceptance of Form*

Application blanks when accepted with a slight reluctance on the part of applicant would seem to indicate some lack of interest in the vacancy to be filled. Such hesitancy might also be due to lack of confidence, while an eagerly grasped blank in most instances very clearly exposes an earnest desire to qualify for any suitable position. There is a peculiar smile to be noticed occasionally when an applicant has been presented with form of application. Observation has led the writer to recognize this as the forerunner of a misrepresentation, and personally styles it a "slipped one over" smile. Careful analysis of the information submitted on the form will usually bring to light the deception occasioning this particular expression.

### *Filling in the Form*

Some persons exhibit as much apparent mental effort in this process as does the average layman when studying an abstruse legal document. The mental processes are slow, and such an applicant should be placed at work not requiring rapid thought nor quick decisions. To some individuals, the required facts are not easily nor quickly recalled, resulting in a longer time to furnish information asked for. The delay of some may be occasioned by a desire to conceal the true facts, which, when given rapidly and with assurance have the suggestion of assurance supported by absolute truthfulness.

### *Presentation of Form*

Whether via mail or in person the presentation of the form offers a study in personal values equal to any other phase of the employment processes. To throw the application on the employer's desk, to hand it upside down, second side up, folded in two or rolled

like a mailing tube, all suggest a lack of training and thought, and tend to detract from the qualifications of the applicant. A dirty application will be usually presented in a slovenly manner while the reverse will usually obtain in the neatly written and clean paper.

### *Contents*

A form lacking in neatness and badly written would disqualify an applicant for an office position, especially if the spelling was incorrect. Such an applicant, however, might possibly be a splendid mechanic or general utility man. Incomplete detail in the application proffered might also deter a decision in the direction of a position requiring care and attention to detail.

The accuracy of the information submitted must be assured, and any corrections or erasures will act as interrogation points on the subjects so changed. Age and salary seem to be most subject to these "changes of mind."

### *Deductions*

The completely filled blank now acts as a representative of the applicant, and will make his appeal as forcefully as the effort and knowledge he has put into its data. This material will guide the employer in placing the applicant at work where his greatest value and knowledge may be utilized.

If unable to at once find a suitable place for applicant, the blank may be marked to indicate work for which he or she might be considered later, *e.g.*, trucker, bookkeeper, machinist, draughtsman, errands, sales, telephone, etc. From the personal characteristics of the suppliant the form may also be used to record the grade in the class indicated.

1st grade	11=	specialty good	—12=	very good.
2nd	"	21=	good.	—22=fair.
3rd	"	31=	poor.	—32=unacceptable.

### *Prospects*

Names of "prospective employees" may now be listed on cards or charts and filed under the classification for which they are considered eligible. The applications may be filed alphabetically for quick reference and later consideration. This file of "prospects" may be used to great advantage in such business houses as employ

large forces of help. A vacancy occurs and the file gives the suitable prospects with phone numbers and addresses.

### *Information*

References of all employees should be attached to applications, and filed numerically or alphabetically in a file of "current" blanks. Should personal information be required regarding an employee, this file will contain just as much as the application form has required, plus the references. Promotions may be arranged with the coöperation of this valuable personal file, which, with the record of transfers from one department to another considered as added experience, will enable the superintendent to gauge possibilities for future advancement and responsibility of employees.

When an employee leaves the firm, his application and references may be marked with record of conduct and reason for leaving, and transferred to a "Left" or "Former Employees" file. Answers to inquiries from future employers may be made from data compiled and the complete record may be referred to and refiled in the "Current" file if former employees are reëngaged.

### *Summary*

From the foregoing it is evident that the application form has an ever increasing value from the moment that an applicant first approaches the employer, to the severance of their interests. With such an understanding it would seem that a fairly detailed form has the advantage over the short blank. The value to the applicant corresponds exactly with that to the employer inasmuch as his saleable assets are presented concisely to the employer. The psychological phases of acceptance and presentation may be played upon by both parties in proportion to the requirements of the position to be filled.